

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8560

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY POR OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

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SUBJECT RICE QUOTA

REF A) STATE 179424, B) KINGSTON A 105

1. RE PARA 3 REF A), COMOFF HAS DISCUSSED PROBLEM OF OBTAINING JAMAICA IMPORT QUOTA AND LICENSE FOR RICE WITH MARKETING MANAGER, UNCLE BEN'S FOODS, WHO CLAIMED THAT HIS 1974/75 SALES HAVE DECLINED DRASTICALLY FROM 1973/74 SALES. UNCLE BEN'S JAMAICA AGENT, LEWIS KELLY AND SONS, HAS TOLD EMBASSY THAT QUOTAS WERE OBTAINED IN 1973 AND 1974, BUT NOT IN 1975. IN A LETTER OF MAY 12 TO KELLY, THE JAMAICA MINISTRY OF MARKETING AND COMMERCE WHICH GRANTS QUOTA ALLOCATIONS INDICATED THAT QUOTA COULD NOT BE ALLOWED DUE TO "FORESEEN DIFFICULTIES THIS IMPORTATION WOULD CREATE IN RESPECT OF OUR LOCAL (SPANISH TOWN) MILL AND IMPORT COMMITMENT TO GUYANA". IN A LETTER OF JULY 10 TO THIS MINISTRY, KELLY APPEALED ON THE GROUNDS THAT:

1) UNCLE BEN'S CONVERTED RICE IS PURCHASED, IN PARTICULAR, IN HIGHER INCOME OUTLETS IN THE TOURIST AREAS OF MONTEGO
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BAY AND OCHO RIOS AND HELPS TO BRING IN FOREIGN EXCHANGE.

2) SALES OF UNCLE BEN'S RICE IN JAMAICA OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS HAVE NOT AFFECTED SALES OF GUYANESE RICE WHICH HAS INCREASED CONCURRENTLY

2. 1975 RICE TRADE DATA IS AS FOLLOWS

A) ESTIMATE FOR DOMESTIC PRODUCTION

(APRIL 1, 1975-MARCH 31, 1976): 6,000 SHORT TONS OF LONG PADDY

CONDITIONAL UPON THE SAME 55 PERCENT YIELD OBTAINED FROM MOST RECENT CROP, THE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (ADC) EXPECTS TO MILL A MINIMUM OF 3,300 SHORT TONS OF FINISHED RICE FROM THESE 6,000 SHORT TONS OF PADDY.

B) PRICES (DOMESTIC RETAIL) IN JAMAICAN CENTS:

UNCLE BEN'S CONVERTED 45 CENTS
MISS LOU (MILLED FROM
IMPORTED SURINAM RICE) 31 CENTS

GUYANESE RICE 31 CENTS

C) 1975 OUTLOOK FOR CARICOM RICE IMPORTS: JAMAICA NUTRITION HOLDINGS, LTD., THE GOJ AGENCY FOR BULK PURCHASES OF COMMODITIES, INFORMED EMBASSY THAT PROJECTED PURCHASES FROM GUYANA ARE 50,000 SHORT TONS, VALUED AT J\$15,433,500. IN ADDITION, JNH HAS ALREADY RECEIVED 2,000 METRIC TONS OF RICE WITH 2,000 TONS MORE ON THE WAY FROM A NON-CARICOM SOURCE, SURINAM

3. COMMENT: FROM ALL INDICATIONS, IT APPEARS THAT JAMAICA HAS PUT ALL ITS EGGS IN THE BASKET OF DEVELOPING ITS OWN INTERNAL RICE SUPPLY AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE (REF B). IN THE INTERIM, THE GOJ EXPECTS TO FULFILL LOCAL SHORTFALLS THROUGH IMPORTS FROM GUYANA AND SURINAM. GOJ'S DECISION NOT TO ALLOW QUOTA FOR UNCLE BEN'S RICE PROBABLY STEMS FROM GOJ DESIRE TO LIMIT HIGH COST IMPORTS DUE TO GROWING TRADE DEFICIT AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DWINDLING FOREIGN RESERVES. DECLINING TOURIST TRADE RESULTING IN POSSIBLY REDUCED DEMAND FROM NORTH AMERICAN BUYERS MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO DECISION. GERARD

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